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STATEMENT OF  
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BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE HANDICAPPED  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND HUMAN RESOURCES  
ON  
EDUCATING DEAF STUDENTS AT  
FEDERALLY ASSISTED POSTSECONDARY SCHOOLS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

We are pleased to be here today to discuss our February 1986 report on educating deaf students at federally assisted postsecondary schools. Our study was conducted at your request, as a follow-up to our March 1985 report, on Gallaudet College and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID).

As you know, our 1985 report analyzed the characteristics of students and the cost per student at the two national schools--Gallaudet and NTID. The report which we are discussing today responds to your request that we compare information on Gallaudet College and NTID to data from the four centers participating in the Regional Postsecondary Education Program for the Deaf. Our recent report analyzed available data for these schools on (1) student characteristics, (2) per student costs, (3) student academic achievement and subsequent employment, and (4) the schools' abilities to serve additional deaf students.

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As requested, our testimony today will focus primarily on the schools participating in the Regional Education Program. However, I will contrast information from the regional schools with data from Gallaudet and NTID where such comparisons are helpful in providing insight as to the operation of the regional programs.

Using data from school year 1984-85, we found that

- students in all schools were similar with regard to the severity and the time of onset of hearing loss, while prior academic achievement of incoming students was generally lower at the regional schools than at Gallaudet and NTID;
- the total costs per deaf student were also considerably lower at the regional schools, however, the gap narrows somewhat when certain unique services not provided by the regional schools such as research and public service were excluded from the Gallaudet and NTID figures;
- the average number of years which students take to complete degree programs vary among the schools depending upon the type of program in which students are enrolled;
- for those schools where data was available, a large percentage of deaf graduates were either employed or continuing their education;
- the schools generally reported operating at or near their student capacity given current funding levels.

## BACKGROUND

The four institutions participating in the Regional Post-secondary Education Program are

- California State University, Northridge
- Seattle Community College
- St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute in Minnesota
- University of Tennessee's Postsecondary Education

Consortium and its member schools:

- Central Piedmont Community College in North Carolina
- Chattanooga State Technical Community College, in  
Tennessee
- DeKalb Community College in Georgia
- New River Community College in Virginia
- St. Petersburg Junior College in Florida

A map showing the location of all the schools is included as attachment I to our statement.

During the 1984-85 school year, the regional schools served 628 deaf students, ranging from 104 in Seattle to 204 at Northridge. As a percentage of total enrollment, the Consortium schools had the smallest percentage of deaf students (.3 percent), while St. Paul had the largest (4.5 percent). In contrast, NTID served 1,240 deaf students (95.6 percent of total enrollment) and Gallaudet College served 1,547 deaf students (78.6 percent).

The regional schools generally require a high school degree for admission, or in some cases, persons who are 18 years of age or older. St. Paul's Vocational Institute allows high school seniors to take courses.

Gallaudet and NTID are national schools that recruit potential students from all over the United States, but most of their students come from the Eastern part of the United States. The regional schools tend to focus their recruiting on certain areas of the country and primarily serve commuting students from adjacent communities. The regional schools therefore have either limited or no campus housing for deaf students. Another major distinction between the national and regional schools is that at Gallaudet and NTID where classes are attended for the most part by deaf students only, classes are much smaller than at the regional schools, where students more often attend classes with hearing students. The student/teacher ratios at the regional schools ranged from 13 to 1 at St. Paul to 23 to 1 at Seattle whereas Gallaudet's ratio is 7 to 1 and NTID's is 9 to 1.

There is a wide variety in subjects offered and degrees granted by the regional schools.

--St. Paul's program focuses on programs in the trade/vocational area, such as auto body repair, and offers diplomas and certificates--it operates much like a vocational high school.

--The community and junior colleges offer vocational career programs, such as dental hygiene, and programs in which students may later transfer to 4-year colleges. They offer associate degrees, diplomas and certificates.

--Northridge has a liberal arts program and offers bachelor's and master's degrees.

Gallaudet is a liberal arts college with such programs as communications and education, and offers associate, bachelor's and graduate degrees. NTID offers technical programs in areas such as business and engineering, and offers associate degrees as well as diplomas and certificates. The multitude of course offerings at the regional schools, in addition to the programs offered at Gallaudet and NTID, provide a wide range of students many choices in postsecondary education.

#### STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The students served by the regional programs, NTID, and Gallaudet are similar regarding the degree and onset of their hearing loss. Between 76 and 95 percent of the students at these schools are severely or profoundly deaf as measured by a hearing loss of 70 decibels or greater in the student's better ear. Between 85 and 95 percent of the students at these schools became deaf at birth or before they reached 3 years of age.

The regional schools, NTID and Gallaudet all admit students with secondary disabilities (including physical, emotional, and learning disabilities). Among the regional schools, St. Paul had the largest percentage of first year deaf students with secondary disabilities in school year 1984-85 (34 percent). The other regional schools ranged from 14 to 18 percent. In contrast, Gallaudet reported 8 percent of its first year deaf students in school year 1984-85 with secondary disabilities.

The educational training received by students before entering the regional schools, NTID, and Gallaudet was given either in a residential or mainstream environment. In school year 1984-85, the percentage of incoming students who had attended residential programs exclusively for deaf students ranged from 36 percent at NTID to 68 percent at St. Paul. St. Paul has traditionally centered its recruiting efforts at residential schools for the deaf which may account for its higher percentage of such students. On the other hand students who enroll at Northridge tend to come from mainstream programs (57 percent). At Northridge, deaf students are fully integrated into classes with hearing students and students we spoke with, as well as students who participated in a 1985 Northridge survey, said that one reason for selecting Northridge was that they wanted the challenge of competing with hearing students. At Seattle, Tennessee, and Gallaudet, the percentage of incoming students from residential schools ranged from 50 to 60 percent.

The academic achievement levels of incoming deaf students also varied among the schools. The mean reading levels of incoming students at St. Paul and four of the community colleges ranged from a 4.0 to 5.8 grade equivalent (5.8 representing grade 5, month 8). Mathematics equivalents at these schools ranged from 5.0 to 8.8. The scores at Gallaudet and NTID were generally higher.

## COST DATA

Before discussing the costs at these schools I should note that care must be taken when comparing per student costs because the schools provide very different programs and services. We also did not independently verify the data provided by each school to assure its accuracy, and certain of the schools used somewhat different methods for calculating their average cost per student. For example, the schools used one of three different methods to determine "full-time equivalent students," which influences their estimate of per student costs.

School year 1984-85 per student costs to educate deaf students, as computed by the various regional schools was \$7,700 at the Consortium schools; \$10,000 at St. Paul; \$12,100 at Seattle; and \$12,400 at Northridge. This compares with per student costs of \$21,600 at NTID and \$25,300 at Gallaudet.

The federal share of costs at the regional schools ranged from 29 percent at Northridge to 60 percent at Seattle. Over 75 percent of the costs to educate deaf students at Gallaudet and NTID comes from federal appropriations.

In our follow-up report, we classified the school's costs to educate deaf students into two categories: (1) similar services, which are the costs that schools incur to educate deaf students on their campus, and (2) unique services, which often have significant costs but which are not offered by all the schools.

The similar services were instruction, academic support, student services, institutional support, plant operations and maintenance, and scholarships and fellowships.

By unique services we mean primarily research, public service, and room and board since the regional schools serve commuting students for the most part. These are major costs at Gallaudet and NTID which carry out research and serve as "model schools" for educating deaf students.

While the total costs per deaf student were considerably lower at the regional schools, the gap narrowed somewhat when these unique services were excluded from the Gallaudet and NTID figures. Attachment II to our statement shows this analysis.

Total federal costs  
per deaf student

In addition to the federal share of school program costs, the government also provides assistance in the form of grants (primarily vocational rehabilitation and Pell grants) to deaf students attending these schools. Although the schools do not control the amount of student assistance, it is part of the federal cost associated with student attendance at these schools. For students who received it, vocational rehabilitation assistance ranged from \$600 at St. Paul to \$2900 at Seattle and Pell grant assistance ranged from \$400 at St. Paul to \$1300 at Gallaudet. Thus an accurate measure of the federal cost per deaf student at these schools should include these grants. Attachment III shows a breakout of all federal costs per deaf student at these schools.



#### STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND PLACEMENT DATA

Both deaf and hearing students at the regional schools carry about the same number of credit hours. The average number of years to complete degree programs varied at the regional schools depending on the type of program, from 2 years at St. Paul to 5.4 years at Northridge. However, deaf students at Northridge took less time on average than hearing students to complete bachelor's degrees. Northridge officials attribute this to the fact that deaf students have support services available to them which allows them to carry full academic loads and to continue schooling without interruptions.

The percent of deaf students that left school during 1984-85 without graduating varied from 23 percent at Northridge to 54 percent at Seattle. Figures were not available for the Consortium schools because 1984-85 was their first year serving deaf students.

Postgraduation employment data was available from only one of the regional schools. St. Paul reported 74 percent of its 1983-84 graduates were either employed or continuing their education as compared to statistics reported by Gallaudet and NTID of 84 and 90 percent respectively.

#### ABILITY TO SERVE ADDITIONAL DEAF STUDENTS

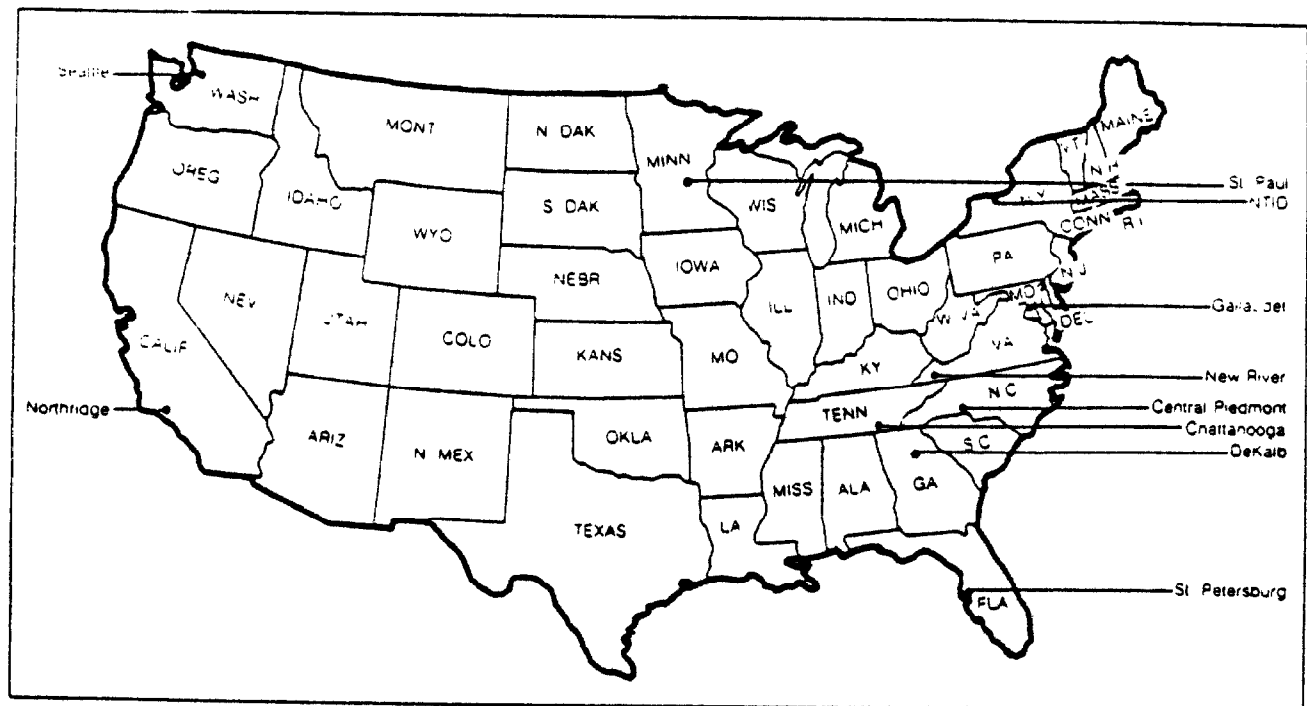
To identify the extent to which more deaf students could be served by the schools, we asked school officials to determine

whether they were operating at full capacity. We also asked the schools whether given additional resources, they could serve more students. Except for Northridge, the schools indicated that they were at or near capacity in providing services to deaf students. Northridge officials said that with time to adjust they could accommodate an annual growth of 10 to 15 percent.

The regional schools estimated that their facilities could collectively serve up to 340 more students at a cost of \$1.5 million which would be used to hire more staff and purchase equipment. A Gallaudet official said that they could accomodate 100 more students with its current funding.

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Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. My staff and I will be happy to answer any questions you or members of the Subcommittee may have.

LOCATION OF SCHOOLS

## ATTACHMENT II

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<u>Total Per Student Cost for 1984-85</u>			
<u>School</u>	<u>Similar services</u>	<u>Unique services</u>	<u>Total</u>
Northridge	\$12,415	\$ 0	\$12,415
Seattle	12,040	50	12,090
St. Paul	9,809	159	9,968
Consortium	7,666	0	7,666
NTID	14,674	6,939	21,613
Gallaudet	15,941	9,341	25,282

## ATTACHMENT III

## ATTACHMENT III

Total Federal Costs Per Deaf Student  
School Year 1984-85

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Federal share of school program costs</u>	<u>Federal share of student assistance</u>	<u>Total federal costs</u>
Consortium	\$ 2,487	\$ 531	\$ 3,018
Northridge	3,586	887	4,473
St. Paul	4,574	1,444	6,018
Seattle	7,317	1,937	9,254
NTID	18,327	1,433	19,760
Gallaudet	19,669	1,027	20,696

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